

## NORTH KOREA

### Korean



The Koreans of North and South Korea share distinctive Mongolian features and are believed to have descended from a single racial group. Korean is the national language of both countries. Many Korean words have Chinese roots due to centuries of diplomatic relations. The Korean writing system uses 26 phonetic symbols.

Officially, the North Korean Constitution gives political power to the people. However, real political power belongs to the Communist Party. The constitution guarantees such rights as freedom of the press, religion, and speech; however, the 23.6 million Korean in North Korea have very little freedom in those areas. For instance, all radio and television broadcasts are strictly controlled by the Korean Central Broadcast Committee. All privately owned radios are "preset" to the government frequency. Current news is often withheld from the public, or even altered. The people often do not learn of news events until weeks, months, or even years after they occurred.

What are their lives like?

Before the 1900's, Korea was an agricultural society with strong family ties. Almost all the people lived in small villages and worked on farms. However, since the late 1940's, the Communists have taken steps to industrialize the country. Today, most urban North Korean work in factories, while those in rural areas continue working on farms.

Arranged marriages are still popular in rural villages. However, a growing number of urban Korean now choose their own mates. Marital bonds have been so strong in the past that divorce was infrequent-even unthinkable. Today, however, the divorce rate among the educated urban Korean is steadily increasing; divorce is no longer a disgrace.

Education for the Korean is free and mandatory for the first 11 years. (This includes a year of preschool.) Students must have Communist Party approval to continue their education after the tenth grade. During their summer vacations, students must work for the state.

In North Korea, the government controls all aspects of Korean life. Most forms of entertainment are supported and controlled by the government. Even the work of artists is restricted. Anything that conflicts with Communist principles is forbidden.

The North Koreans eat mostly rice, occasionally supplemented by fish, vegetables, or fruit. The national dish is kimchi, a highly spiced mixture of Chinese cabbage, white radishes, and various other vegetables.

What are their beliefs?

A mixture of Confucian thought, Buddhism, and shamanism (belief in an unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits) were previously dominant among the Korean, but have been officially repressed since 1945. The former North Korean ruler, Kim Il Sung, was held in high regard and worshipped by the Korean. He was presented as omniscient and omnipresent. The new regime under Kim IlJong is as oppressive as the former. However, it is not yet known whether the people have to worship the new ruler.

Although religious freedom is technically guaranteed by the North Korean government, religious activity is strongly discouraged. Many Christians have been killed for their faith.

The Korean believe that deceased family members remain within the family circle, in spiritual form. For this reason, the most important concern of the family is to produce a male heir to carry on the family line. He is called on to perform ancestral rituals in the household and at the family grave site.

What are their needs?

After severe flooding in North Korea, there has been an acute food shortage in many areas. Some people have even been forced to eat grass and roots to survive. They need to be introduced to the One who is able to supply all of their needs.

Politically, North Korea is one of the most highly controlled societies in the world. The government has officially decided against Christianity and the Gospel for the entire nation. The North Korean are in need of political and spiritual freedom.

## Prayer Points

- \* Pray that laws in North Korea that restrict the preaching of the Gospel will be changed.
- \* Ask God to create an openness to Christianity within the hearts of the Korean.
- \* Pray that the doors of North Korea will soon be open to Christian missionaries.
- \* Pray that God will send His Spirit to convict the Korean of their need for the Savior.
- \* Ask the Lord to protect, strengthen, and encourage the small number of Korean Christians.
- \* Pray that God will give these believers opportunities to share the love of Jesus with their own people.
- \* Ask God to raise up strong local churches among the Korean of North Korea.



Population in this Country:

23,797,000

Largest Provinces: Chagang-do Hamgyong-bukto, Hamgyong-namdo, Hwanghae-bukto, Hwanghae-namdo Kaesong-si, Kangwon-do NajinSonbong-si, Namp'o-si, P'yongan-bukto

People Name General: Korean

Primary Religion: Non-Religious

% Christian Adherents: 1.48 %

% Evangelical: 1.00 %

Persecution Rank: 1 (Only top 20 ranked, 1 is the highest).

Primary Language: Korean (23,797,000 Speakers)